



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

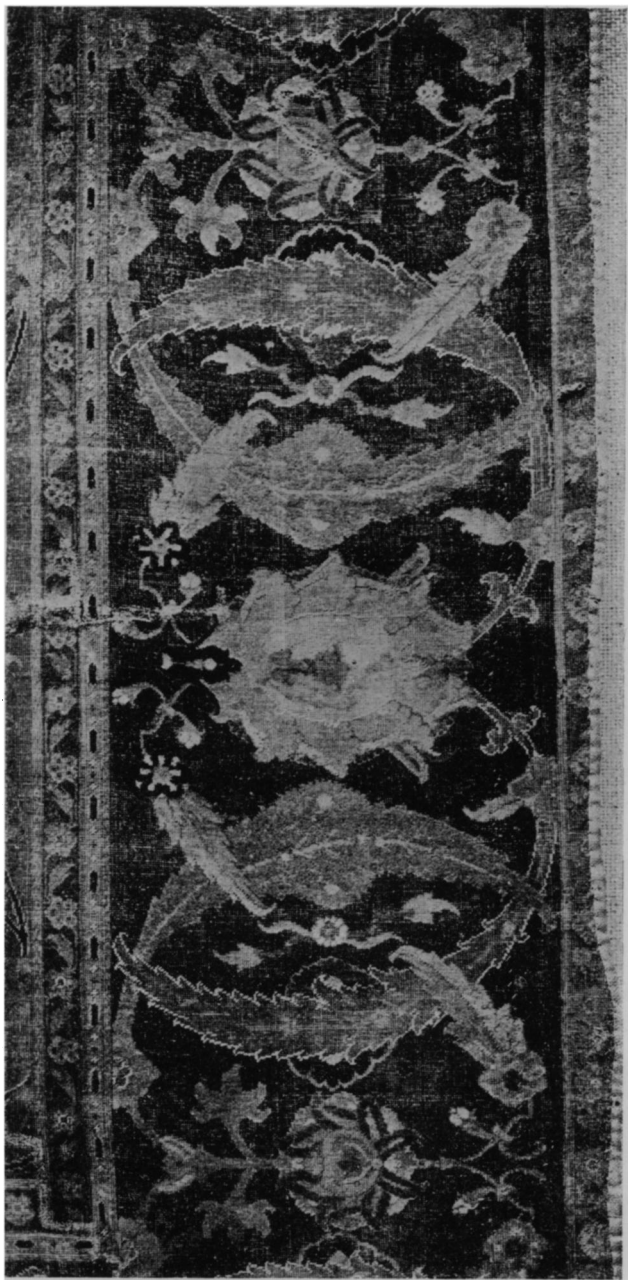
This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).



Persian Herat Rug. Late Sixteenth Century  
Gift of J. H. Wade

# THE BULLETIN OF THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

SEVENTH YEAR

MAY 1920

NUMBER 5

## HERAT RUGS IN THE MUSEUM COLLECTION

The emphasis given to Oriental rugs by the great exhibition held in the Museum from December 15, 1919, to February 15, 1920, has called particular attention to the rugs in the Museum's own collection. These were exhibited in Gallery IX during the exhibition, and made a particularly impressive showing in comparison with the splendid fabrics loaned to us. In the Oriental Rug Supplement to the January *Bulletin*, none of these rugs were illustrated, and only a short portion of the text was devoted to them because it was felt that their importance demanded fuller treatment at a later time, in a regular *Bulletin* article. For this reason it has seemed timely that suitable recognition should be made of the six examples of Herat or so-called Ispahan rugs in the Museum collection. The large, square Indian rug and the Hispano-Moresque rug will be referred to in a later issue of the *Bulletin*.

There are six examples of Herat rugs: five presented to the Museum by J. H. Wade, and one forming a part of The John Huntington Collection. The group presented by Mr. Wade consists of one complete rug, 15 feet, 1¼ inches by 7 feet 1½ inches; a second, which has been pieced together to form a complete rug, 12 feet by 15 feet 6½ inches, although at some time it must have been of considerably larger size; and three other large fragments of fine quality, sizes, 10 feet 6 inches by 20 feet 2 inches, 9 feet 10 inches by 8 feet 7 inches and 5 feet 11 inches by 4 feet 9 inches. The carpet in The John Huntington Collection is a rug of very large size, being 27 feet by 10 feet 8¼ inches.

Certain types of rugs with rose center and green or blue-green borders have for a long time been classed under the name of Ispahan, in fact most antique Persian rugs of whatever type, have been erroneously grouped in trade circles under this all-embracing term. Further research has brought out the fact that Ispahan, while one of the greatest cities of Persia in the later years of her power, was at no time a great center of carpet manufacture; rugs were made there, but in no such number as

those exported and called by that name would lead us to believe.

By other authorities the rugs have been called Indian or Indo-Persian, but this, in the light of the latest scholarship, seems to be unfounded. Perhaps one of the reasons for this attribution is that many were found in India, where apparently they had followed in the footsteps of the Mogul Emperors of India, who, it must be remembered, were a Persian Dynasty.

The more these rugs are studied, the more certain it becomes that their provenance must be Persia. They have none of the stiff though naturalistic treatment, or the static quality, inherent in the usual Indian rug design, and their color tonality is not as rich or full as the typical Indian product. Martin, in his great book "Oriental Rugs before 1800," in all likelihood gives the correct provenance, when he attributes the entire group to Herat, in Eastern Persia, just over the border of what is now Afghanistan. This city and the surrounding neighborhood, had long been a center of wealth and culture, and under the rule of Shah Abbas became one of the great rug-weaving centers of Persia, even exporting large quantities of rugs to Europe. It is an interesting fact to remember in connection with this attribution that the typical design which has been carried down into modern rug weaving, the design composed of palmettes surrounded by curved lanceolate leaves, has been commonly called by tradition the Herati pattern.

There are certain characteristics which appear in practically all rugs of this type. The peculiar color quality has already been noted. In addition, such a motif as the palmette, is used repeatedly in the borders, usually flanked by curved lanceolate leaves of characteristic design. Leaves of this type are also found throughout the decoration of the main field, in combination with the Chinese cloud band and graceful scroll patterns.

Herat rugs show a more strongly particularized design than do many of the fabrics of the early sixteenth century, so that the individuality of the rug weaver is lost in a close adherence to type. During the period of the reign of the Shah Abbas, (1586-1628) and his successors to the throne, Persian Art had thus sacrificed some of its early delicacy and refinement for a broader, general effect. Yet many of these rugs have a supremely decorative quality, both the color and the bold character of

the pattern being well calculated to carry out the desired end. The color contrast of the borders and center field is particularly happy and throws into relief the beauty of many of the border designs which were carefully worked out as units, so as to permit their repetition as many times as was necessary. Thus, the commercial element entered slightly into their production, but the drawing still shows the greatest possible adjustment of commercial ideas to an artistic product. Later, in the seventeenth century, when these rugs were produced in very large numbers, some of the early artistic qualities were lost. Designs were repeated constantly with a visible weakening of their original significance.

Martin points out that in the early rugs the borders show the most beautifully thought out designs, and the borders of the specimens in the Museum reproduced in the illustrations, demonstrate this point. In rugs, as in many other forms of art, the cruder renditions of a design do not necessarily come first. They often are the work of imitative artists who merely represent to the best of their abilities the designs which a supremely gifted artist has created.

The three borders reproduced emphasize this strikingly. In the earliest rug (page 62), which was made in the second half of the sixteenth century, the border design of palmettes, framed by the broad, sweeping curves of the lanceolate leaves, forms a unified design of great power. It will also be noticed how beautifully the individual details are treated, the inner drawing of the leaves and palmettes being worked out with painstaking fidelity. The second example (page 75—Fig. 1) again shows creativeness of the first order. The leaves have perhaps not quite so much beauty of line as in the earlier example, but the detail shows to great advantage in comparison with the decadent drawing, both of leaf and palmette motifs in the third border illustrated. In this last piece (page 75—Fig. 2), which is a fragment of the seventeenth century, the leaves have become merely repetitious renderings of a misunderstood motif and the drawing of the interior details shows a loss of the early subtlety and beauty.

This visualizes the first steps in a continuous degeneration from the designs of the best period, steps which led to the final extinction of an historic type. In the third decade of the

## THE BULLETIN OF THE

eighteenth century Nadir Shah revived for a moment something of the former glory of Persia, but the decadence of her power had gone too far, and the success he had was secured at the expense of what was left of her early artistic supremacy. Herat was taken and the entire neighboring district laid waste, the remaining rug weavers being scattered over the face of Persia. His reign thus marks the extreme end of the earlier rug production. For many years it had been steadily declining. The Museum is fortunate indeed in owning six examples which illustrate the characteristics of the early and fine period before the degeneration set in.

W. M. M.

## MEETING OF THE COLLEGE ART ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

The College Art Association of America held its ninth annual meeting in The Cleveland Museum of Art on April 1st, 2nd and 3rd. The sessions were well attended by members from the Eastern and Southern states, as well as by those from points nearer by. Some of the visitors from the more distant cities had their first view of the Museum and its collections; and all expressed the pleasure they took in their visit and their appreciation of the hospitality extended to them.

The sessions on Friday, April 2nd, were transferred from Cleveland to Oberlin, where the Association had the pleasure of seeing the Dudley Peter Allen Memorial Art Building, and was entertained by its Director, Professor Clarence Ward and Mrs. Ward. The Association was also indebted to Mr. and Mrs. E. S. Burke, Jr. of Cleveland who opened their house to its members for a private view of their choice collection of the Barbizon masters, and to Mr. and Mrs. Ralph King, who entertained the visitors at their home for tea, and gave them an opportunity to view their rare and varied art collections.

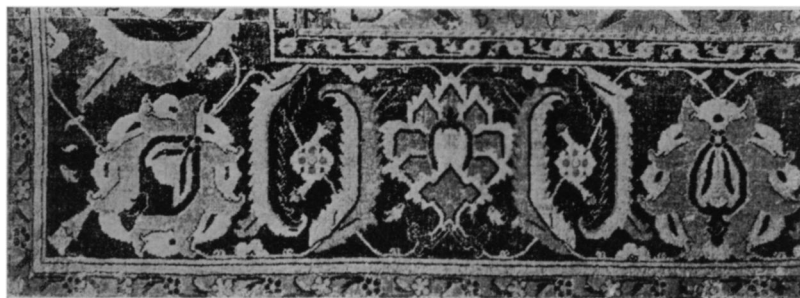
It is needless to say that the visit of the Association was greatly enjoyed by the Staff of the Museum, and it is hoped that Cleveland may again be selected as the meeting place.

The order of meetings and program as carried out is printed on the following pages.

G. U.



Persian Herat Rug. Late Sixteenth Century  
Gift of J. H. Wade



Persian Herat Rug. Seventeenth Century  
Gift of J. H. Wade